

Prevention

Partners

Avenues

The Importance of Having a Health Screening

According to the American Heart Association, in 2001 more than 25 percent of South Carolinians suffered from some form of cardiovascular disease, which accounted for 82,219 hospitalizations. The costs of cardiovascular disease nationwide are staggering. During that same year, the American Heart Association estimated that cardiovascular disease cost \$298 billion in direct and indirect costs nationwide. This estimate includes hospitalizations, physician services, medications and lost productivity.¹

But, the fact that many people are not even aware they are at risk for developing these illnesses may be just as dangerous as having them. Not knowing what your health status is in relation to developing hypertension, heart disease and diabetes places anyone in a game of Russian roulette—no one knows when the killer bullet will hit. One simple solution is to participate in the State Health Plan's Preventive Worksite Screenings.

It's economical.

Participating in a health screening is one of the best investments you can make for your health. **A health screening is all it takes to find out whether you have a potential health condition.** Offered to employees and non-Medicare retirees covered by the State Health Plan, the Preventive Worksite Screening service is very affordable. **A \$15 copayment supplements the State Health Plan's payment.** In a physician's office, the comparable service costs \$200. Detecting a disease or medical condition early allows you to make lifestyle changes, which puts you in control of your health and, over a lifetime, can save valuable health care dollars.

**The Inside Spot**

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It's detailed.

The Preventive Worksite Screening includes a lipid profile (total cholesterol, LDL, HDL and triglycerides); a chemistry profile that includes blood urea nitrogen, creatinine, glucose and electrolytes; a hemogram which measures red and white blood cells and provides hemoglobin levels; blood pressure; height and weight measurements; and a written Health Risk Appraisal. The results of the screening are confidential.

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Health Screening

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It's easy.

Many participants in the screening program forward the results to their primary care physician to be added to their medical history file. Even if your physician has conducted the same screening profile in the past, Prevention Partners health screening can alert you to any changes in your health status. **A health screening takes only 10 minutes to complete, making it very convenient for employees and non-Medicare retirees to participate.**

Here's how.

For screening information and registration forms, visit Prevention Partners' early detection Web page on the Employee Insurance Program's Web site at www.eip.sc.gov. Click on the Prevention Partners link, and then choose "Early Detection."

Worksites have the opportunity to host a Preventive Worksite Screening Program. It is convenient and minimizes time away from work. A Prevention Partners coordinator, benefits administrator or designated employee can coordinate the screening. Hosting a screening is simple. If you would like to coordinate a screening at your worksite, just complete and return a screening request form to Prevention Partners.

If your worksite does not have the required minimum of 25 people to host a screening at your worksite, you and your fellow employees can participate in a regional screening. Regional screenings are held once a month throughout the state. Listed below are the regional screenings scheduled for the remainder of 2004:

MAY 12-13 (WED.-THURS.)	CHARLESTON
JUNE 10 (THURS.)	GREENVILLE
JUNE 24 (THURS.)	HAMPTON
JULY 15 (THURS.)	FLORENCE
AUGUST 19 (THURS.)	GREENWOOD
SEPTEMBER 15-16 (WED.-THURS.)	COLUMBIA
OCTOBER 14 (THURS.)	ROCK HILL
NOVEMBER 4 (THURS.)	BEAUFORT
NOVEMBER 18 (THURS.)	DARLINGTON
DECEMBER 15 (WED.)	ANDERSON

We encourage all eligible employees and retirees to participate in this invaluable State Health Plan benefit!

¹"The Burden of Cardiovascular Disease in South Carolina, 2003 Edition." South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

The New Health Epidemic: Obesity and Overweight

An unprecedented majority of American adults are overweight or obese due to a sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy diet and poor exercise habits. People who are overweight or obese have a greater chance of developing high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, high cholesterol and certain cancers.

Poor diet and physical inactivity contributes to this epidemic. Sixty-four percent of Americans are overweight or obese. Deaths due to poor diet and physical inactivity rose by 33 percent over the past decade and may soon overtake tobacco as the leading preventable cause of death. **And, while most of the major preventable causes of death have declined or changed little since 1990, deaths due to poor diet and physical inactivity have increased.**

In South Carolina, more than two million people classify themselves as overweight or obese.¹ In other words, *half of the South Carolina population is classified as overweight or obese.*

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Becoming a Nutritional Pro

One of the first steps in combating overweight and obesity is to set sound and realistic nutritional goals. Your nutritional goals should take into account the *kinds of food* you eat as well as the *amount of food*, regardless of whether you want to lose weight, feel better, lower your cholesterol or blood pressure or set a better example for your family.

Set a goal.

To start with, it is important to set a small, incremental goal. Once you've accomplished that, set a slightly higher goal. Write down your goals in a notebook and keep track of the foods you eat by writing them down. This will allow you to assess your progress and your overall nutritional intake. Your nutritional goals should incorporate the following fundamentals:

- Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and is moderate in total fat, salt and sugar.
- Eat a wide variety of foods from each food group (grains, vegetables, fruits, dairy, meats/eggs, etc.).
- Eat at least five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.
- Eat a variety of grains—especially whole grains—every day.
- Balance the calories you eat with those you burn. A sedentary person requires fewer calories than a physically active person.
- Learn to read food labels and make it a habit to read them *before* you buy.
- Control portion sizes. Avoid eating more than what you need.



Control Portion Size.

Controlling portion size is very important in achieving a healthier lifestyle and weight.

One way to control portions is to let your plate be your guide and to use common sense. Picture a clock face on your plate. The area between 12 and 3 o'clock should be filled with your meat or dairy serving for a given meal. If your meat or dairy portion takes up more than one-fourth of the space on your plate, it's too much. The rest of your plate should be rounded out with servings of grains, fruits and vegetables.

Practice the following portion-control techniques at home and when you eat out:

- **Serve only what you want to eat.** Don't put more on the table than you want to eat at one sitting. If a recipe serves four and there are only two of you, cut the recipe in half before you cook, or divide the full recipe into four portions after you cook—but before you eat—and store the extra servings in containers for another meal.
- **Eyeball your food.** Measure snack foods like popcorn and pretzels before you put them into serving bowls. Take a mental picture of how much space one serving takes up in your bowl so that you can identify how large a serving is next time. When serving a dip for raw vegetables, measure out one serving into a separate bowl so that you won't "over-dip." Once you learn to compare reasonable serving sizes to the sizes of other things, such as a deck of cards, the palm of your hand or a computer disk, it will be easier to identify and control portion sizes at a glance.
- **Get extras on the side.** When dining out, order foods that are harder to measure "on the side." You can't measure salad dressing once it's poured over your greens, but you *can* spoon out the correct portion when it comes on the side. Tip: Always request to have condiments served on the side.
- **Don't be afraid to ask.** At restaurants, find out how many eggs are in an omelet. If there are three or four, request just one or two. If the waiter brings your entree and the steak is larger than a deck of cards or the pile

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The Costs Associated with Physical Inactivity



The benefits of moderate physical activity are well known: lowered risk for heart attack and stroke, reduced weight and improved mood. Researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently documented another major advantage: **decreased health care expenditures.** The CDC study found that physically active individuals had lower annual *direct medical costs*¹ than did inactive people. **The cost difference was \$330 per person, based on 1987 dollars.**²

This is the first study ever to examine direct medical costs associated with various levels of physical activity by reviewing actual medical expenditures. They found that Americans 15 years and older who engaged in regular physical activity—at least 30 minutes of moderate or strenuous physical activity three or more times a week—had annual direct medical costs averaging \$1,019 versus \$1,349 for those who were inactive. Persons with health conditions that limited regular moderate physical activity were excluded from the study.

The study found that physically active people had fewer hospital stays and physician visits and used

less medication than physically inactive people. The cost savings were consistent for men and women, for those with and without physical limitations, and even for smokers and nonsmokers. **The biggest difference in direct medical costs was among women 55 and older, supporting the widely held belief that the potential gain associated with physical activity is especially high for older women.**

The level of physical activity measured in this study was even more modest than current Federal guidelines of 30 minutes or more of moderate physical activity five or more days a week, suggesting that following current recommendations could yield even greater cost savings.

Changes that promote physical activity may be as simple as improving the location and appearance of stairwells to encourage walking at work or as complex as the redesign of communities. Some communities have existing infrastructures that support physical activity, such as sidewalks and bicycle trails; or worksites, schools and shopping areas in close proximity to residential areas. In other communities,

similar amenities could be developed to foster walking and cycling as a regular part of daily activity.

The potential savings if *all* inactive American adults became physically active? **\$29.2 billion in 1987 dollars, or \$76.6 billion in 2000 dollars.**

Does Spam Have You In A Jam?

Internet *spam* has become a big issue in the age of electronic mailing. Spam is generally defined as unsolicited bulk email, typically advertising some product or service.

Many Internet service providers and software manufacturers offer quarantine software that filters out unfamiliar e-mail addresses. Across the country, worksites have installed such software to block spammers from e-mailing their employees. This can present a challenge when this software cannot distinguish important e-mail messages from spam.

In recent months, Prevention Partners has received calls from worksites and subscribers, indicating that they are no longer receiving our e-mail notices and announcements. We are advising all worksites and employees who are experiencing this problem to ask their worksite computer specialists to allow e-mails from Prevention Partners to be received without being filtered by spam-blocking software.

Source: National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

¹ The value of health care resources (e.g., tests, drugs, supplies, health care personnel, and medical facilities) that are consumed with respect to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease or injury, as well as with respect to the provision of an intervention, including costs related to its side effects or other current and future consequences.

—Gold M.R., Siegel J.E., Russel L.B., Weinstein M. (eds). *Cost-effectiveness in health and medicine*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

² The 1987 National Medical Expenditures Survey (NMES), the most comprehensive health care information available, was used for this study.

The Facts and Causes of Overweight and Obesity

The Facts.

- In 1999, 61 percent of adults in the U.S. were overweight or obese (had a Body Mass Index¹ greater than 25).
- In 1999, 13 percent of children ages 6-11 and 14 percent of adolescents ages 12-19 were overweight. *This prevalence has nearly tripled for adolescents in the past two decades.*
- The increases in overweight and obesity can be seen in all age, racial and ethnic groups, and in both genders.
- In the U.S., about 300,000 deaths each year are associated with obesity.
- Overweight and obesity are associated with heart disease, certain types of cancer, Type 2 diabetes, stroke, arthritis, breathing problems and psychological disorders, such as depression.
- The total direct and indirect costs, including medical costs and lost productivity, amount to \$117 billion each year.
- The study, "Actual Causes of Death in the United States, 2000" found that 400,000 deaths that year were related to poor diet and physical inactivity. Tobacco use accounted for 435,000 deaths.

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Prevention Partners Web Picks

Here are two Web sites that are great resources for health and wellness information.

1. Health and Wellness - Building Better Health (Advance Rx.com and BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina)

This is a great Web site for health information and for calculating your personal health status, using a variety of online calculators for body fat, ideal weight and nutrition analysis. This site also includes an animated, interactive "Personal Trainer" that allows you to select specific areas of the body and then demonstrates exercises that target those areas. Go to <http://sc.buildingbetterhealth.com>. The Personal Trainer program is located under "Cool Tools."

2. Small Step.gov

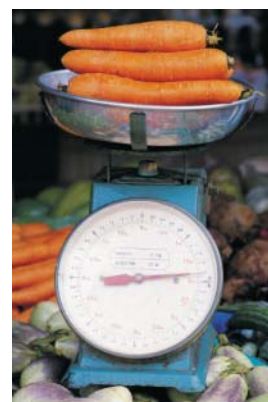
This is a new Web site from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to address the growing problem of obesity and physical inactivity. Internet users may register to receive newsletters that focus on physical activity and nutrition. The Small Step site also provides an activity tracker that allows you to input different types of physical activity, review progress as you train and change personal goals as you progress. You can visit this Web site at www.smallstep.gov.

Nutritional Pro

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- of pasta is bigger than a baseball, ask the waiter to halve the portion immediately and have the rest wrapped to take home. If you visit a restaurant that serves big portions, share an entree with a friend and just order an extra side of vegetables or a salad to supplement your meal.
- **Food Substitution. Always substitute healthy foods for unhealthy ones.** For instance, if you are having a light turkey sandwich on whole wheat and it comes with chips, substitute the chips with a healthier choice, such as fresh vegetables. Broccoli and carrots provide the same satisfying "crunch," but they are a much healthier alternative. When cooking meals, substitute olive oil in place of butter or margarine. For dessert, try sliced fruits instead of ice cream.

Incorporating these nutritional skills into your daily routine may take a little time and effort at first, but it's important to make the first step and stick with it in order to see progress. Your eating habits weren't formed overnight, and changing them won't occur overnight, either. But, setting and reaching small, realistic goals is the first step toward a healthier you!



The Facts

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The Causes.

- Overweight and obesity result from an imbalance involving excessive calorie consumption and/or inadequate physical activity.
- For each individual, body weight is the result of a combination of genetic, metabolic, behavioral, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic influences.
- Behavioral and environmental factors are large contributors to overweight and obesity and provide the greatest opportunity for actions and interventions designed for prevention and treatment.

Sources: *The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*; National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's Web site at www.cdc.gov

¹ Calculating your *Body Mass Index* (BMI) is a tool for indicating your weight status. It is a measure of weight for height. For adults ages 20 and older, BMI falls into one of these categories:

BMI	Weight Status
Below 18.5	Underweight
18.5 – 24.9	Normal
25.0 – 29.9	Overweight
30.0 and Above	Obese

BMI can be calculated using pounds and inches with this equation:

$$\left(\frac{\text{Weight in Pounds}}{(\text{Height in Inches}) \times (\text{Height in Inches})} \right) \times 703 = \text{BMI}$$

For example, a person who weighs 220 pounds and is 6 feet 3 inches tall has a BMI of 27.5:

$$\left(\frac{220 \text{ lbs.}}{(75 \text{ inches}) \times (75 \text{ inches})} \right) \times 703 = 27.5$$

New Health Epidemic

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In 1999, South Carolina ranked first in the nation for stroke deaths and 18th for deaths from heart disease. Cardiovascular disease causes more than 37 percent of all deaths in the state.² Segments of South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia associated with high stroke mortality rates have become known as the "Stroke Belt." South Carolina Pee Dee and coastal areas have exceptionally high rates of stroke deaths, which has given this region the title of "Stroke Buckle" of the "Stroke Belt."

To combat the overweight and obesity problem, people must take a more proactive role. We must become more physically active and make better nutritional food choices. Eating a balanced diet containing all food groups, controlling portion sizes and making physical activity a part of our daily routine can make a big difference in living a healthier life. It is important to make changes, even small changes, to improve our own health and the health of our families.

¹*The State*, March 10, 2004.

²"The Burden of Cardiovascular Disease in South Carolina, 2003 Edition." South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control

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Avenues is produced by the
South Carolina Budget and Control Board
Employee Insurance Program

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